SANKIRTAN YOGA

By

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

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The Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy
THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY
P.O. SIVANANDANAGAR (VIA RISHIKESH)
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SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Born in 1887, in the illustrious family of Sage Appayya Dikshita, Swami Sivananda displayed, even in his younger days, an innate sense of cosmic love and eagerness to serve all. Soon he became a doctor and went to Malaya where he served the sick with great devotion. But, he was not satisfied. He continued to feel a void.

At the height of his career, he renounced the world and turned to the Himalayas. Rigorous *tapas* over a protracted period gradually metamorphosed the doctor into a dynamic, God-realised Soul.

Eager to share the new-found wealth with his unhappy brethren, Swamiji established the Divine Life Society in 1936. In 1948, he founded the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy. Widest possible dissemination of spiritual knowledge forms the vanguard of the Divine Life Mission. Sivananda considers it the greatest service to mankind. Already the author of over 300 widely-read, life-transforming works, Swami Sivananda still continues to write as vigorously as ever before.

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Dedicated
To
SRI GAURANGA MAHAPRABHU

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Today, after over three decades of Swami Sivanandaji's divine service unto the Lord and His Creation, in the shape of spread of His Name, and of the glory of Sankirtan, even the peoples of the materialistic West need hardly be sermonized on the glory of the Lord's Name. Swami Sivanandaji's mission has numerous aspects, based, as it is on the establishment of Gita-Dharma on earth; but the fulcrum of the grand machinery of DIVINE LIFE which he has presented to Man for recharging his inner being with the current of his essential Godly nature, is KIRTAN. This small booklet which we gladly present to the aspiring public is more or less an introduction to the saintly author's greater works on Bhakti.

With the Lord's Name on his lips, his heart pouring forth sweet music in praise of his Beloved!

Siva, intent on diving deeper into the ocean of nectar that is Divine Name, slipped off from the cruel embrace of worldly life, thirty-seven years ago. Siva renounced worldly prosperity for the sake of the Lord's Name; to him the Name was food, drink, clothing and shelter; Name led him to Realization; the spread of the Lord's Name or Sankirtan has since been his main concern.

We have great pleasure in presenting to the public this valuable work of Sri Swamiji Maharaj on Sankirtan Yoga. We trust that this book will be a great boon to all sincere aspirants, who wish to attain *summum bonum* of life-God-consciousness, treading the path of Devotion.

Sri Tulsidasji says "Name is even superior to the Lord, because the Nirguna and Saguna aspects of Brahman are tasted and realized by the power of Name. Rama delivered a single lady, Ahalya; whereas His Name has purified crores of sinners. Rama gave salvation to two of His faithful devotees, Jatayu and Sabari. But His Name has been the savior of countless wicked souls." Such is the glory of the Lord's Name. How can it be described by mere futile words? It is verily an impregnable unassailable armor, ever protecting the devotee from all hostile forces.

Blessed indeed are they on whose lips the sacred Name of the Lord is ever present. He who sings the glorious Name constantly, obtains at once the

fruits of all austerities rituals and sacrifices. For these latter are all merely the means to please the Lord whereas Name brings the devotee face to face with the Lord Himself, nay, transforms him into his beloved Lord. Because repeating the Name is equal to possess the Lord Himself, for *Nami* and *Nama* are one.

The science of Sankirtan, its efficacy and how it is conducted in different provinces in India, even in the foreign lands, have all been beautifully explained in the following pages. In the end, the addition of some selected Dhwanis also adds to its practical value.

-Publishers.

I am most grateful to you for sending me regularly publications from the Vedanta Forest Academy. It has been my endeavor right from the time I had the good fortune to pay my respects to you at Sivananda Nagar last year to read as much as I can from these publications and I feel considerably benefited by the same. I cannot thank you adequately. I only wish that I may deserve all the kindness and blessings you are bestowing on me.

-Sri N.V. Gadgil,
Rajbhawan,
Chandigarh.
18th April, 1961.

SANKIRTAN YOGA

SANKIRTAN PURIFIES AND NOURISHES

If you ask a man "Are you doing worship daily?

Are you regular in doing Japa, Kirtan and meditation?" He gives the answer "My dear sir, what shall I do? I cannot get now good rice or wheat flour, vegetables, ghee and milk. The price of food stuffs is considerably high. The foodstuffs are adulterated. I am starving. I am weak. I cannot do any worship or meditation" He puts the whole blame on food.

Food says "Do not blame me, Sir. My condition entirely depends upon rain. There is no good rain in these days, Hence the production of food is very little and meagre. You will have to blame the rain. If there is abundant rain there will be plenty of food."

Rain says " Do not blame me. My life depends upon Agni or fire. Refer the matter to Agni who is my Lord."

Agni says " Do not blame me. People do not perform sacrifices or Homa or Havan. A few Agni Hotris perform Havan in a half-hearted manner without sufficient ghee and materials. Millions of people perform their own Agnihotra in their own way. They smoke cigars and cigarettes ceaselessly and pollute the atmosphere. Even there are cigarette-girls and cigarette-boys. As soon as they get up from their bed, they start Agni Hotra as the first thing in the morning and taint the air with their puffs of smoke. Horrible! Shameful! It is their first worship of the Lord. How can you expect good rain and good food? People are degenerated. No Sandhya, no recitation of Gayatri, no Kirtan, no Japa. They cat drink. smoke, sleep. That is all. The day closes. Life ends. Refer the matter to Vayu or air, my lord. I am born of Vayu only. If the atmosphere is rendered pure by Havan there will be good rain and abundant food.

Vayu says "You will have to refer the matter to Akasa, my Lord. I am born of Akasa. His property is sound. If Akasa is pure, I will also be pure and will direct Agni to bring forth abundant rain.

Akasa says " doubtless I am the source or womb for the four Tattwas Vayu, Agni, water and earth. I generate sound. People have polluted me by using horrible vulgar words. Even children utter foul words when they are playing.

Parents teach them to use vulgar words. They are their Gurus. Children imitate them. People do not do Kirtan regularly. If all do Kirtan daily the whole atmosphere will be purified. There will be abundant rain and abundant crops. In olden days there was Kirtan in every house, and so there were good rains and good food. Even this little food on this earth is due to the Kirtan done by some devotees. Had it not been for this the whole world would have perished by this time on account of severe famine. If you really want peace and plenty do Kirtan, purify the atmosphere and propitiate Lord Hari. Sankirtan is the bestower of eternal bliss, immortality and abundant food which helps a man to do his worship, meditation and attain the goal of life.

O man! Give up at once this vulgar smoking. Do not pollute the atmosphere by uttering vulgar words and smoking. Utter always Sri Ram, Hari Om. Train your children also in this direction. Do Kirtan regularly in your house with your children and all members of the family and in the temple, Mutts and town halls and enjoy the bliss of the Eternal.

VARIETY OF KIRTAN

Sankirtan Yoga can be practiced by sincere devotees and earnest Sadhaks after God-realization in a variety of ways. Just as we take delight in preparing various kinds of dishes out of one and the same vegetable and relish their tastes immensely in each of the preparations individually, even so devotees sing in ecstasy the blessed Names of the Lord and enjoy the unparalleled spiritual bliss. Mind is a peculiar combination of various kinds of moods, temperaments, whims, fancies and sentiments. It is a strange mixture of various sentiments emotions etc., that is known of in this world. Therefore, the Rishis of yore have designed various methods to control the mind. Control of the mind forms the most important and major item of spiritual Sadhana in the path of God-realization.

Bhakti Yoga and especially Sankirtan being the easiest, surest and quickest means of God-realization it is worthwhile giving very careful attention and

earnestness in its practice and hence details will be of great help to Sadhaks in this direction. Of the various methods of Sankirtan we have the following varieties.

People of different communities. localities and provinces conduct Kirtan in their own usual and established manner. For example, there is Sankirtan prevalent in Lativia, a description of which is given elsewhere in this book. Srimati Anna Plaudis of Riga is a great Sankirtan enthusiast in Lativa and through her we know something of Lativian Sankirtan which the members of the Divine Life Society at Latvia also practice. In South India they have what is called 'Divya Nama Kirtan'. Maharashtra's, Bengalis, Gujaratis, Biharis etc., have their own ways of conducting Sankirtans, in their Mohallas.

Some of the most important and existing modes of Sankirtan are 1. Akhanda Kirtan, 2. Prabbata Kirtan,
3. Prabhat Pheri 4. Nagar Kirtan, 5. Boat Kirtan,
6. Lorry Kirtan, 7. Kirtan on elephant back, 8. Party Kirtan, 9. Nam Kirtan, 10. Gunanuvad, 11. Yas Kirtan. 12. Naradiya Kirtan, 13. Lila Kirtan etc.
Thus, Sankirtan can be done in a variety of ways to suit the temperament time and place. Sankirtan can be done _without any restriction to its time and place. Not only Bhaktas even Vedantins can do Sankirtan and we have Vedantic Kirtans. The attributes of the Nirguna Brha-man are described by means of attractive Kirtans.

Generally, Sankirtan is conducted in temples, houses, etc. Devotees join together at sunset in temples or they keep a photo of the Lord in a hall, decorate it with flowers etc., and seat themselves in front of the picture in two rows facing one another.

In the beginning Omkar or Pranava is chanted loudly in chorus by all the devotees three times. Then Ganesh and Guru Kirtans are sung. One of the devotees sings the names of the Lord melodiously and others follow him next. This method ensures more attention, harmony and uniformity. This preliminary Kirtan consisting of Ganesh and Guru Kirtan lasts for about 5 minutes. Next the Maha mantra or Kalisantarana Upnishad Mantra 'Hare

Rama Hare Rama &c.' is repeated for nearly 10 minutes. Then the turn comes for all other devotees too to sing and lead the Kirtan individually. They sing for a definite period and it is beneficial to keep 5 to 10 minutes as the minimum time. When all the devotees have sung Kirtan the Kirtan is concluded with Jayajayakars, prayer for world peace and repetition of Santi-Mantra Poornamada Poornamidam etc. In the end there should he common meditation for a few minutes. There should be also Arati to the Lord's picture and distribution of the sacred Prasad.

Next comes Akhanda Kirtan a detailed description of which has been given in the book " Bhakti and Sankirtan."

Sankirtan is conducted in the early morning hours also. The devotees leave their beds at 4 a.m., wash their face, teeth etc., They also take a bath if convenient and then sit for Sankirtan. They keep their Ishta devata in front of them and do Kirtan as mentioned above. Before the starting of Kirtan, they repeat certain sacred hymns to Sadguru, Lord Vishnu, Saraswati and others. This is called Prabhata Kirtan. When Prabhata Kirtan is concluded the devotees start the Prabhata Pheri. Pheri means going round and Prabhati Pheri means going round in the morning doing Sankirtan of God's names in a batch. Generally, Prabhata Pheri is conducted before sunrise. It is done as the first item of programme in all spiritual congregations and assemblies like Sankirtan Sammelan, Sadhana weeks etc. This serves to make the people know of the forthcoming congregation.

The philosophy behind Prabhata Pheri is this. The people of the locality who are not in the habit of getting up before sunrise will develop the habit of waking before sunrise in the Brahmamuhurta. They will hear the names of the Lord chanted as soon as they get up which purify the inner impurities of mind. The effect of Prabhata Pheri Kirtan is beyond description. It generates a divine current in the whole Mohalla or town. There will be peace, joy and ecstasy in the minds of all those who sing and hear.

Nagar Kirtan: This is generally done in the evening after 4 p.m. It can be conducted in the morning also.

Here the group of devotees start from a particular place with harmonium, Kartals and other instruments of music. After Ganesh Kirtan and Guru Kirtan and Mahamantra Kirtan the devotees sing various other Sankirtan Dhwanis. Nagar Kirtan can be done without instruments also. This is more effective. The pure vibrations of the Lord's names will not be tainted by the instrumental sounds in the middle. The devotees go round the town and return to the place where they started and do Arati to the Lord with great zeal.

Nagar Kirtan is conducted on Poornima, Ekadasi and other days sacred to the devotees like Ramanavami, Janmashtami, Sivaratri etc. In south India Nagar Kirtan is conducted in many places at night with grand illumination. In the month of December Nagar Kirtan is conducted daily in Brahmamuhurta. This is sacred to the Bhaktas. The month of Margasirsha is very sacred according to Srimad Bhagavad Gita which says, "Masa-nam Margasirshoham-I am the month Margasirsha among months"

Boat Kirtan: This is done in places like Hardwar, Rishikesh, Brindavan, Ayodhya etc., where there are sacred rivers. Devotees sit in a boat with a nicely decorated picture of the Lord kept in the center. The Kirtan begins and the boat moves slowly from place to place. Sometimes the devotees spend 12 hours or 24 hours in the river doing Kirtan. In Rishikesh Boat Kirtan is conducted during Sadhana weeks. Sometimes the Kirtan continues even for 3 days. The spiritual benefit derived through a Boat Kirtan is beyond description. Even atheists will have faith in God if they do Boat Kirtan. Pilgrims while crossing the Ganges during Mela times and on ordinary days also, from or to Ananda Kutir sing the Lord's names in sweet tunes. This fills the air with pure spiritual vibration at all times.

Lorry Kirtan: To disseminate the knowledge of Bhakti and Sahkirtan the best way and most potent means is lorry Kirtan. It helps Sankirtan propagandists very much. This is the easiest and quickest means of spreading Sankirtan in all places. Here the party of Kirtanists move in motor lorry from place to place.

Kirtan on Elephant Back: This method of Kirtan is prevalent in U.P. more than any other place. The picture of the Lord is well decorated and mounted on an elephant's back. Some devotees sit on the elephant. A huge party of Sankirtanists with Kartals etc., accompany the elephant all the while singing the Names of the Lord in chorus. The names of the Lord are written on big cloths, paper or inscribed on metal plates. The devotees hold them aloft and walk before the procession. Spiritual teachings and laconic sayings of the Vedas and of saints and Rishis are also written on boards and exhibited to the public during Melas and religious fairs. They produce deep and incelible impressions in the minds of those who happen to see them. But what do you find in these days? There is much noise and fuss everywhere. You see pompous advertisements of "Dongre's Balamrit", "Melin's food" etc. It is really lamentable indeed.

Party Kirtan: The devotees arrange themselves in two sections or batches before starting the Kirtan. One party sings in chorus and the other batch follows them in chorus. They do Kirtan alternatively. There is a big and mighty spiritual vibration when party Kirtans are held in masses. There is a silent competition between the parties. Each one tries to excel the other in tune. There is great concentration in this method doing of Kirtan. The mind is easily merged in the Lord and Bhav Samadhi ensues for a sincere Bhakta.

Nam Kirtan: In Nam Kirtan there is repetition of mere names of the Lord. Various names of the Lord are composed in a particular way and sung melodiously.
This is a special Sadhana by itself. Akhanda Kirtan or Nam Kirtan is highly purifying. The mind is casily elevated.

Gunanuvad: In Gunanuvad there is description of the glorious deeds of the Lord in His various incarnations. Side by side Kirtans are also conducted. This is also called Harikathakalaksepam in South India.

Yas Kirtan: In Yas Kirtan the devotees sing the praises of the Lord in a variety of ways. They recall His various kind acts where he helped devotees like Dhruva, Prahiad and others.

Naradiya Kirtan: The Divine sage Narada, the Chiranjivi roams about in all the three worlds singing
"Sriman Narayana Narayana Narayana" even today.
Devotees who have strong faith and devotion and yearn for his Darshan can do this Kirtan and get the blessings of Rishi Narada.

Lila Kirtan: This is prevalent mostly in the Punjab and United Provinces. Young boys and girls enact the life of Sri Krishna and Lord Rama in public. Lila Kirtan if enacted by devotees with faith and devotion the Lord is highly pleased and the persons who witness the Kirtan will derive immense benefits thereby. If the Lila Kirtan is not directed and controlled by a saintly personality there may arise corruption. Kindly go through the article "Canker in Sankirtan" in "Bhakti and Sankirtan."

DIVYA NAMA KIRTAN.

Salutations to the Sat-Chit-Ananda Para Brahman, the All-Pervading, the Bhakthatma, Who dwell there where His Glories und Names are sung by devoted Sankirtanists..

Sankirtan is one of the nine modes of Bhakti. It has been developed in various ways at various places. Here an attempt is made to describe as to how Sankirtan has been developed in South India, with spesial reference to Divya Nama Kirtan.

Sankirtan (or Bhajana) begins with 'Jaykaras' and Slokas or verses on, the glory of the Lord's Names and glory of Sankirtan.

After a few songs and Namavalis, the blessings of Sri Guru are invoked, and then, one by one, of the various Deities and Devatas. For instance, after Slokas, songs and Namavalis on Sri Guru, comes Anjaneya Kirtan, then

some portion of the famous 'Geeta Govinda' (popu-larly known as 'Ashtapadi', as each piece of it contains eight Padas or verses, the "Geeta Govinda" containing 24 such pieces, Slokas occuring in between the pieces) of Sri Jeya Deva. The "Geeta Govinda" is full of «Madhu-rya Rasa" and fully reflects the "Sakhya Bhav" and Dasya Bhava". After this, the songs of Sri Narayana Teertha (known popularly as "tharangam") are sung.
The Tharamgams of Narayana Teertha are full of devo-tional-Vedantic type songs. The Tarangam is followed by songs of Kabir. Mirabai, Surdas, Tulsidas, Saint Tyagaraja. Then are sung slokas and songs in praise of Sri Ganesha, Sri Saraswati Devi, Sri Subramanya, Lord Siva and Panduranga. 'Glory of Sadhus' is an important item in the South Indian Kirtan. And then the All-Pervadling Lord is invoked by the following song :

"Ehi Tata Sri Vasudeva, Ehi Pahi Gopee janavallabha,
Dehi Deva mudam, Ambujanabha,...Ehi Tata.
Vrajayuvatee-ridyambuja-Bhaskara
Vijayagopalayati Mohanarupa,...Ehi Tata."

(Meaning: Come on, Father, O Lord Vasudeva, O
Beloved of Gopis, Come, Protect us, etc. etc.).

Note: The word "Tata" means also "O dear friend,"
"O my beloved child".)

After having got into this mood, or Bhava, the Bhava of a devoted son receiving his Father with great reve-rence, respect and love, the devotec (the son) offers to his father, the All-pervading Lord, Dhoopa, Deepa, Flo-wers, Chandan, etc. and offers Prasad.

It is at this moment that 'Jaya' 'Jaya' kars are done to the Lord and in this mood or Bhava is the Divya Nama Kirtan begun.

'Divya Nama Kirtan' is known by the popular name of 'Deepa Pradakshinam' (doing Pradakshinam or going round and round a Deepa or light). A five-faced lamp (known as kuttivilakku) is lit up and adorned with flowers,

chandan and kumkum. It is on this Deepa that the devotee does Avahan of the Lord. The Dcepa or the Light is placed in the centre to symbolise the Light of Lights, to give the devotee the Real Light or Knowledge and lead him on from darkness to Light.

(To deviate a bit from the trend, Divya Nama Kirtan includes in it all the nine modes of Bhakti, Sravan (hearing the Lilas of the Lord), Smaran (repeating His Names), Kirtan (singing His Lilas), Padasevan (worshipping His feet), Archan (offering flowers), Vandan (prostrations unto His feet), Dasya (Servant-Bhav), Sakhya (the Bhav of a friend), Atma-Nivedan (Self Surrender).

The All-pervading Lord assumes various forms to please His Devotees. He is a Bhaktatma. Round the
Deepa the devotees stand and begin to sing His names, "Rama Krishna Govinda, Krishna Rama Govinda," etc., etc., As this proceeds further and further, and as the Bhava increases, the devotees go round and round the Deepa, clapping their hands and dancing in joy, suited o to the trend or rhythm of the respective songs. It is noteworthy that these Namavalis and Kirtans are sung in different tunes or Ragas.

When the song,

"Ehi Mudam Dehi, Sri Krishna, Krishna,
Mam Pahi Gopala Bala, Krishna, Krishna.
Bhavya Pahi Natanam Kuru, Sri Krishna, Krishna, Balabhadrasahita, Sri Krishna, Krishna," etc., etc..

is sung, one will reach the sublime heights of Bhakti.
It is beyond expression to give a vivid picture of how a Bhakta will feel when he sings this song doing Pradak-shina of the Deepa, clapping his hands and dancing in joy.

Many of the songs contain "Pahi Mam" «Raksha
Mam" indicating absolute self-surrender.

It is just about the middle of Divya Nama Kirtan that the famous "Gopika Geetam" (of Srimad Bhagawata, is sung. Picture as it does the various Lilas of Lord Krish-na, sung by the Gopis, the song takes one nearer and nearer the Bhav of Atma-Nivedan.

The "Gopika Geetam" is followed by the songs "Anga-nam Anganam," etc. All the devotees will form a circle by interlocking each other's fngers and rotate arourd the Deepa. The beauty of this song lies in this that people rotate in the reverse direction at the end of one Padam a portion of the song. The next song is still more excellent in that the devotees expand the circle bit by bit (thus forming a bigger and bigger circle) as the song proceeds. This is done in quick succession and the tune and tala of this particular song is quite consistent with the quick movements.

This is followed by Kolattam, which is really very interesting and thrilling.

Then comes "churning." This is done in batches of two or three (but in any case not more than three.)
One man takes hold of another man's left and right palms by his right and left palms and rotate in a circle (around the Deepa) keeping the hands in a horizontal position. The song selected for this purpose is one of Mira Bai, whose devotional songs still inspire each and every one.

After this, the devotees sing various songs on the various Devatas, and after this, a famous song of Sri Nara-yana Teertha Swami on Lord Siva is sung. It is "Siva Siva Bhava Saranam"s It is at the fag-end of this song, just where the words "Ananda Natana Vinoda," comes, one of the devotees assumes the pose of Nataraja and dances in cestasy. It would seem that Lord Nataraja of Tilliambalam (Sri Chidambaram) Himself is dancing! Such would the Bhava created, such a sphere this song and dance will create.

Then comes the song "Tharo Jagannatha Tharo Hare" which deals with all the ten Avatars of Lord Vish-nu. At the end of this song, when Lord Anjaneya is in-voked, one of the devotees will assume the pose of Anja-neya and not

unoften one of the devotees to please the "Anjaneya" will put a plantain into "His" mouth.

The finishing touch to Divya Nama Kirtan is given by dedicating every one of our actions to Him,

At the end of Divya Nama Kirtan, Slokas in praise of the Lord are sung, and the Deepa is lifted from its place by one of the devotees (and as soon as this is done, the Bhaktas will bow to the place where the Deepa was pla-ced) and it will be taken to the place from where it was brought. The person taking the lamp will walk with rhythmical steps, in conformity with the rythm of the song selected for this purpose, viz. one of the portions of "Geeta Govindam" of Sri Jaya Deva, "Lalita Lavanga Lata Parisilana," in praise of Lord Krishna.

The Lord will be requested by the Bhaktas to go to bed and a song is specially sung for this purpose. And the cock will cry 'kokoko', to announce that it is early morning. (This is actually done by one of the Bhaktas.) And all the devotecs will sing in the Bhupala tune to rouse up the Lord.

"Kausalya Supraja Rama Purva Sandhya Pravarta-te Uttishtha Narasardula Kartavyam Daivamahnikam," etc,

(This particular sloka occurs in Srimad Valmiki Ramayana, where Sri Viswamitra wakes up Lord Rama and Lakshmana.)

With a "Mangalam" song, with "Jaya" "Jaya" kars, the Divya Nama Kirtan is concluded.

KIRTAN IN BENGAL

I

"Glorified, above all, is the chanting of
the various names of Lord, which cleans

the mirror of chitta; which extinguishes
the great fire of the successive births
and re-births; which operates like the
moon beam upon the white lily of spiritual
life of bride Vidya; which swells the ocean
of bliss; which gives the chanter the
fullest enjoyment of that Divine Love at
the utterance of each word and bathes the
mind and the senses in Divine Bliss."

-Lord Gouranga.

Bengal is known as the birth-place of Sankirtan. Lord Gouranga was the first man, who pioneered the propagation of Sankirtan Yoga in Bengal, Assam and Orissa during the middle of fifteenth century. His Kirtans are widely sung there.

There are several kinds of Kirtan in Bengal. Paalaa Kirtan, Shyama Sangit, Parvati and Nama Kirtan are the important ones. Kirtans are generally sung with accompaniments or Khol, Jhal, Veena, Pakhwaj Mridanga and other musical instruments.

Paalaa Kirtan is the mosr ancient Kirtan in Bengal, They are written in verse with rhythm. Most of them deal with the life history of Lord Krishna. They were written by Ramprassad, Chandidas, Vidyapati during sixteenth century. Paalaa Kirtan is divided in several Parts. They are; Balakanda, Yashoda-Gopal, Ras Lila, Gopi Viraha etc. The Vaishnavas sing this Kirtan in chorus on come special occasions. Khol and Jhal are the main accompaniments.

Shyama Sangita or the song of mother Kali is the special Kirtan for the Shaktas, the worshipper of Shakti. They also sing Siva Sangit. These Kirtans are sung only on the special occasions.

Recitation of the names of various gods and goddesses and hymns relating to them is called Nama Kirtan. They are generally sung in the evening after Pooja. Parvati Kirtan is another form of Nama Kirtan, sung in different Swara.

Particularly, it is sung in Bhairavi tune in the early morning. It is also sung in Prabati Feri. During Arati, they do Nritya with khol and other musical instruments and sing "Hari Bol".

KIRTAN IN BENGAL

II

The Sanskrit verb 'Krit' means praising. In the 10th Skanda of Srimad Bhagavata is a beautiful description of the Lord's entrance in his 'Lilabhumi' Brindaban: —

"Barhavipeedam Natavaravapu Karnayo Darnikaram Bibhratvasam Kanakakapisam Baijaiantincha malam Randhran Venoradarsudhaya Purayan Gopabrindai Brindabanam Swapadaramanam Pravishad Gitakirti."

The last word Kirti denotes praise and from this is derived 'Kirtan' which is now commonly known as a certain type and method of melodious singing, particularly singing Lord Krishna's and His 'Leela.' Only praising the name of the Lord and His 3 'Leela' in melody for the purposes of keeping the flame of 'Bhakti' burning in our hearts can be termed 'Kirtan'

Saint Tukaram of Maharashtra in one of His 'Abhangs' has charmingly said that as the purifying waters of 'Janhavi' have come down to the mortal world from Lord's feet so the flow of 'Kirtan' comes out of the hearts of mortals and reaches the Lord's feet. Both these flows are purifying.

Singing about the Lord is usually known as 'Bhajan' in most parts of India and there is nothing comparable to 'Kirtan' singing of Bengal outside the province.

Kirtan can be classified under two heads:-

1. 'Namakirtan' 2. 'Leelakirtan' or 'Rasakirtan.' Singing the names of the Lord in melody is termed

'Namakirtan.' The main Sadhana in the nine kinds of 'Bhakti' is 'Namakirtan.' The influence and utility of this are highly appreciated among the 'Vaishnavites' of Bengal among all the religious cults of India. They think that the essence of all religios in 'Kaliyuga is 'Namasankirtan'..."Kalau Namasankirtanat." Singing Lord Hari's name aloud is 'Sankirtan. From this 'Prem' blossoms out and a devotee forgets the existence of outer world while he sincerely sings the name of the Lord. This is called 'Avesha'. A 'Bhakta' attain 'Samadhi' by singing the Lord's names just as a 'Yogi' does through 'Yogasadhana? The primary aim of Namasankirtan' is to attain prem and the main aim of 'Vaishnav' cult is to generate this 'Prem.' It is said that when Lord Chaitanya used to do 'Namasankirtan' dipped in Prem thousands accompanied him.

Such singing is done according to the appropriate
'Ragas' and 'Raginis' of the hours of the day and night, e.g. in the morning hours in 'Bhairab,' in the noon in 'Bagesree,' ihe evening in Purabi' or 'Imam Kalyan,' in the night in 'Behag.'

Mass singing in such style and compass when the singer and the audience both calling the Lord with tears rolling down their cheeks is characteristic of Bengali 'Kirtan' and such examples are rare except in Indian music.

'Namasankirtan' is usually singing Lord's name e. g.
'Hare Kirhna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare-Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare' but as the Vaishnavtes of Bengal believe Sri Chaitanya as an incarnation of Lord Bhagavan they sometimes sing Sri Krishna Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda Hare Krishna Hare Ram Sri Radhe Govinda' or ‹Nitai Gour Radhe Shyam Hare Krishna Hare Ram.' Lord Sri Chaitanya and Nityananda deluged Bengal with "Prem' by 'Namasankirtan', hence they are known as the father of "Sankirtan'. The greatest among teachings of Lord Sri Chaitanya is : —

"Satye Yad Dhyayato Vishnum
Tretyam Yajato Makhaih
Dwapare Paricharyayam

Kalau Tad Harikirtanat."

When the mind is attracted towards the Lord the heart experiences a selfless, blissful state and this is called 'Rati'. When this 'Rati' gets a greater hold it is termed 'Prem'. 'The devotee does not wish for 'Moksha' because even asking for or wanting 'Moksha' is a type of Vasana and selfishness. When 'Bhagavan' is the only object of attainment what else can be desired. The utility of 'Namasankirtan' is the purification of the heart and it is both the method and the goal as the name and the named are one and the same.

The doings at different periods and in different circumstances and ways of Lord Kirshna are termed
'Leela'. Any song composed and sung on such 'Leela' is known as 'Leelakirtan' or •Rasakirtan'. Some are fond of "Namakirtan' and others of 'Leelakirtan'. It is ascribed to Lord Sri Gouranga that 'Leelarasa' should be tasted in company of very intimates whereas 'Harinams Sankirtan' should be preached and practised among general companies, lest those who are not deeply immersed in Krishna Bhakti misunderstand or misconstrue the significance of the Lord's Leela. But it is difficult to judge the attainments of general companies. If Lord's name gives one pleasure it is but natural. Singing Lord's qualities and about His 'Lecla' should also give him equal pleasure. Whatever overfloods the heart with bliss is termed 'Rasa'. As hearing of Lord's doings merges the heart in 'Ananda' or bliss, 'Leela Kirtan' is otherwise termed 'Rasakirtan'.

There are 64 kinds of 'Rasa' in 'Kirtan'. 'Sringara' is the main 'Rasa' divided into 'Vipralambha' and
"Sambhoga' and each of them is sub divided into four which in their turn are further sub-divided into eight each.

A Kirtan singer should not only be a good musician but also must be learned, otherwise he may unwittingly offer the audience by "Rasavasa' i.e. mixing up on inappropriate 'Rasas' in a Leela.

In the Vaishnavite Literature 'Padavalis' which are lyrical poems and songs combined concerning Lord Krishna's Leela have a very high place and generally are those which have been composed by Vaishnava Bhaktas and Saintly persons like Jayadev, Chandidas, Vidyapati, Jnandas, Govindadas and others. In the present age Rabindranath Tagore, Sisir Kumar Ghose have also made a gift of beautiful 'Padavalis' but the Orthodox sehool of "Vaishnavas' in Bengal, though they admire these, do not admit these to be 'Rasakirtan' in the real sense of the term. The excellence and sublimity of 'Padavalis' lie in their power of attuning the mind to real 'Bhava' which is beyond Poesy, Rhyme, Cadence or Tune. It has been said before that the 'Bhaktas' believe that God-consciousness and God's proximity could be felt by singing Kirtan, hence the latter has a distinct and definite place in spirituality. If judged from the literary standpoint 'Padavalis' are lyrics, from the musical view point these are 'Kirtans' in the original sense of the term as explained in the biginning of this article, and from the spiritual standard these are 'Bhajana' of 'Bhagavan'.

There are five primary 'Rasa's acknowledged by the Bhaktas', over and above the usually known nine 'Rasa.'

These five are :
1. 'Santa' … Equilibrium.
2. 'Dasya' ... Service.
3. 'Sakhya' … Intimacy, friendship.
4. 'Vatsalya' … Filial affection.
5. 'Madhurya' ... Love, sauve.

Out of these the first one is more appropriate for the Yogis and the rest four are very dear to the 'Bhaktas' according to taste and inclination.

Principally 'Padavalis' are based on the 'Leela' of Lord Krishna. His 'Bhajan' had been in vogue from earlier times bit Lord Sri Chaitanya placed 'Krishna I cela' on a higher pedestal. Lord Sri Chaitanya's ideal of 'Prem' inspired many poets and they composed many 'Padas' or poetical songs taking as

their theme 'Gouranga Leela'. These 'Padavalis' are known as 'Gourachandrika'. In real Kirtan first 'Gourchandrika' has to be sung before 'Krishna Leela'.

The life, character and teachings of Lord Sri Chaitanya are sublime, deep, uplifting and purifying.
Volumes like 'Chaitanya Charitamrita', Chaitanya Chandrodaya,' 'Chaitanya Bhagavat,' 'Chaitanya Man-gal' testify to this. It is doubtful if anywhere in the world any religious preacher or reformer had been able to generate so much feeling or emotion as the name of Sri Chaitanya has done or is still doing among the 'Vaishnavites' of Bengal. So 'Padavalis' now mean lyrical songs based on the 'Leela' of 'Radhakrishna' as well as 'Gouranga'.

A complete chronological history of Kirtan is not available. The Old Archacological ruins of Somapur
'Bihara' in Paharpur in North Bengal is the mute evidence of the fact of the great influence of the then decaying Budhistic Religion having its stronghold in that part of the Province. With the lapse of time these Buddhists took to mysterious and secret rituals and cults. The practitioners of these cults are mentioned in 'Vaishnava' literature as 'Pasandi.' More than about 1000 years ago Buddhist Acharyas like Luipad used to perform something similar to 'Kirtan'. The 'Bhikkus' and 'Bhikkunis' used to do 'Kirtan' in different localities. In Koi Fong Iron Temple in China, built sometime between 900 and 1280 A. D. there is a picture of Kirtan as it is practised in Bengal, an exact Replica of Kirtan done in the days of Lord Sri Chaitanya. It is taken for granted that the sweet flow of 'Kirtan' started from the time of Jayadev. It has been said before that 'Sri Chaitanya' and 'Nitya-nanda' are deemed to be the creators of 'Sankirtan'. It is said that Maharaja Gajpati Prataparudra of Puri when he heard 'Sankirtan', asked his chief courtier 'what music is this ?'. His courtier Pundit Survabhouma Bhattacharya explained that 'Lord Chaitanya' had created this.

It is mentioned in 'Chaitanya Bhagavat' that on his return from Gaya Lord Sri Chaitanya was mad after

'Harinam', The pupils of his 'Tole', religious school, told Him "Lord, we also would like to do Kirtan with you but we do not know how to do it, please teach us." Lord Sri Chaitanya sang :

"Haraye Namaha Krishna Yadavaya Namah
Gopala Govinda Rama Sri Madhusudana".

in accompaniment with clapping of hands. Thus began 'Sankirtan' in India. He advised that 'Krishnanam' is "Mahamantra', and asked everyone to sing : —

"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare
Hare,
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare".

Dancing to the accompaniment of musical instruments like 'Mridanga,' a special type of Drum, and 'Mandira' - Cymbals—are integral parts of 'Kirtan'. It is the practice to begin 'Kirtan' after worshipping 'Mridanga' with Sandalwood paste and a garland of flowers. In the state of Manipur where 'Vaishnavism' is in vogue Kirtan starts after 'Arati' of 'Mridanga'—also called "Khol' and 'Mandira' - generally known as 'Karatal'. The 'Kirtania' or Kirtan singer is also garlanded before commencement of the function. The Kirtan singer, his party and the whole audience start 'Gourchandrika' standing and then everyone sits down and the subsequent portion of Kirtan is performed sitting. In a Kirtan when both the singer and the audience take to dancing enraptured, it is termed 'Uddanda Kirtan'.

There are five schools of Kirtan : (A) One introduced by Narottamdas, a great 'Vaishnavabhakta', resident of a place called Khetri in the Pargana of Garerhat in

Rajshahi, is known as 'Garanhati' (B) In the district of Burdwan from Manoharsahi Pargana came 'Manohar- sahi' introduced by Acharya Srinivas and propagated by Jnandas, Balaramdas, who were contemporaries of Narottamdas. (C) From Ranihati, also in Burdwan district comes , Reneti'

similarly introduced by Acharya Srinivas and subsequently popularised by Vaishnavadas and Uddhavadas. D. From Mandaran in Midnapore district comes Manderini' and the fifth E. 'Jharkhandi from Jharkhand also situated in Midnapore.

'Mandarini", 'Reneti' and Jharkhandi. types of Kir-tan are more or less out of use now. 'Garanhati, school is now revived by 'Brajamadhuri Sangha? 'Manchar-sahi' is mostly in vogue now.

Upto the middle of 18th century 'Kirtan' singing was in a flourishing state in Bengal but with the advent of
'Kavigan' and 'Pachaligan' 'Kirtan' suflered a temporary set back in popularity. But it came to be knowm as 'Dhap.' A very accomplished man by the name of Ma-dhu Sudan Kan horn in Jessore, about the middle of 19th century, composed many 'Padas on 'Radha-Krishna Leela' and used to go about singing 'Dhap' in company with the male and female members of his family and though not the originator of this style of Kirtan, he gave it a great push,

In the present times a type of Kirtan is sung known as 'Dhap' 'Kirtan' This was usually sung by women. During the 'Sradha' ceremonies when Brahmins, Pundits learned scholars and distinguished guests are invited such 'Dhap Kirtan' used to be sung by some famed song stress. During the last 30 years these women singers are gradually replaced by men. With the advent of men songsters the revival of high class 'Kirtan' is slowly taking place. Names of Rasikdas, Premdas, Ganeshdas are famed but they have passed away. Another name, Ram-kamal Bhattacharya hailing from Patna district about 25 years ago took Calcutta by storm by his great powers of Kirtan singing. He had such charm and extraordinary genius that at times where accomodation permitted a gathering of nearly 10,000, audience used to hear him singing with rapt attention in pin drop silence. This gentleman is no more.

Amongst the old schools, Adwitadas Babajee Pandit was very well-known in his time.

Places like Panchthupi, Moinadal, Sreekhanda, Na-vadwip, are still famous for Kirtan in Bengal.

In Navadwip every year during a function known as
'Dhulot,' Kirtan parties from diflerent places congregate during the Falguni Purnima-birth anniversary of Lord Sri Gouranga - and sing Kirtan. Daring Vaishnava festivals or anniversaries of birth dates or passing away dates of Bhaktas, Kirtan is sung congregationally at places like Santipur, Srikhanda, Jhamatpur, Katwa, Kalna, Kendudilwa Ran Keli etc,

Kirtan snug at the commemoration ceremonies of Vaishnava Bhaktas, Acharyas and Mahapurushas is known as 'Suchak Kirtan? At the present time Ramdas Babajee excels in this type of Kirtan. It is difficult to explain the actual spontaneous 'Sattwik Bhavas' like tears, bliss, shivering, sweating, which manifest during and in accompaniment with his Kirtan.

There is one particular characteristic in 'Kirtan' which is while singing 'Padavali Kirtan a singer to illus-trate, to elucidate or to bring out the latent beauty or hidden meaning of the composition can and usually does add ornamentation of his own. This is known as 'Akhar' and this usually beautifics the singing and makes 'Kirtan' more attractive.

This is such a vast and deep subject that it is impossible to do justice to 'Kirtan' in a short article like this, only salient points have been culled from the authoritative treatise on the subject written by Rai Bahadur Khagendranath Mitra, to whom acknowledgement and thanks are conveyed herein.

5. KIRTAN IN MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra also is celebrated for Kirtan. The spiritual influence of Sri Eknath, Tukkaram, Nam Dev, Jnana Dev etc., the reputed saints of Maharashtra still exists.

It is understood that Maharashtra Kirtan begins with the invocation of the grace of Lord Ganapathi, with Ka-the and music interspersed, ending with the recital of some Pranic story.

Maharashtras do not use music, harmonium and Tab-las. TheyuseEktar Satar, Tambura and Kartals and Tepri (wooden piece). They sing the names of lord Krishna or Vittal or Vittobha and the Bhajans or Abhan-ghas of Saint Tukkaram. They commence with Brahma. nirupa or Avahan or Guru Stotra and Ganesh Stotra and Bhajan.

They do Nam Saptaham. They have Palki procession also. They tie Gungrue to their legs and do Nritya while doing Kirtan either in a circle or in two lines.

Jnana Dev was the founder of an institution called Warkari Sampradaya which is still alive in all its glory in the Maharashtra. It is called "Wari" to Pandarpur." All who have accepted this Wari undertake to go to Pan-darpur on Ashadh Ekadasi (June-July) and Kartik Ekadasi (October-November) days. They must visit Pandarpur at least once, if not on both these days. It is considered so very sacred that except in the event of physical illness, they continue to go to Pandarpur the whole life and from generation to generation. Devotees collect together and walk to Pandarpur from their villages. They do Kirtan on the way.

They start the Kirtan with Jaya Jaya Ram Krishna Hari. Saint Tuka Ram had initiation of the Mantra in his dream. In Alandi near Poona they do Akhanda Kir-tan of "Jnana Dev and Tukaram." In Gangapur Kir-tan of Lord Dattatreya is performed.

6. ARDHA VASA

Before starting Akhanda Kirtan, a ceremony called Ardha-vasa is performed the previous night. A big Mandapa is erected. The Mandapa is decorated with mango leaves, flowers etc. Then the picture of Lord

Krishna or Lord Rama is placed on the Simhasan, which is also nicely decorated. Just in front of the picture Vedi (a big pillar) or the Tulsi plant is decorated by various pictures of Lord Krishna, Chaitanya Maha-prabhu etc.

The Kirtan is done till mind-night. In the end Pooja is done with recitation of Stotras and Arati. Then the Lord goes to sleep by the recitation of Shayana Mantra.

In the early morning, the priest comes and does Pooja. Four Akhanda Deepas are placed in the four corners of the Vedi.

At the end of Akhanda Kirtan the devotees go for Nagar-Kitan, singing the names of tbe Lord or Maha-mantra in chorus. They come back and do the ceremony called Dadhi Kandon. Curd mixed with water and sandal paste is sprinkled by the Darbha grass over the persons. The following song. issung, when the water is sprinkled.

Lord Krishna speaks to Mother Yasoda :—

SONG

"O Deyya Mayya Makhan Khilade,
Makhan Khilade, Makhan Khilade,
Brindavan Key Kunj Galin Mein,
Dadhi Key Dhoom Machade. (O Deyya Mayya.....)
O my Beloved Mother! Please feed with butter.
O feed me with butter? feed me with butter !
Let there be a bustling shower of curds,

Everywhere in the busy streets of Brindavan !
(0 my Beloved mother.....)

7. LATVIAN SANKIRTAN

The Latvians form the Baltic Branch of Indo-European family of nations. Their language is the best proof of their ancient origion. It is akin to Sanskrit. The Latvians have preserved their Aryan strength also in choir-singing which they foster with love. All down the ages the Latvians have created hundreds of thousands of folk-songs and they are the fountain from which they derive their ethical and spiritual outlook on the world. It has been the tradition to mark every event, from the cradle to the grave, by singing collectively in a common place. This is Latvian Sankirtan.

The Latvian folk-songs or "Dainas" as they are
called here, are in verse and rhythm. Although the creation of individual authors-"dainas," reflect the life of the nation in its entirety, and handed down and spreading from generation to generation they have assumed a final aspect which fully portrays the soul of the people. They embrace the animate and the inanimate world alike and gorify all the great events of the naition.

The Sankirtan movement in India began to decline owing to some evil causes, but at the present day there is a revival of it. Even the geographical situation of Latvia has not only facilitated the exchange of goods and brought the Latvians into contact with the other countries; it has also taught them to weather many a gale without losing their national individuality. In order to preserve the great spiritual inheritance of the Latvian nation, some patriots have devoted a life-time to collect and study the "Dainas."

Despite their great antiquity the Latvian "Dainas", are recited and sung by the people on appropriate occasions with great reverence and much feeling. In the songs the Latvians find comfort and consolation when times are bad.

Then "Daina" owe their existence to the love of singing. It is also the source from which arose the tradition of the Latvian people to arrange song festivals from time to time. They are musical events of high order, with vast numbers of performers and enormous audiences.

In the summer of this year, on 18th and 19t June, 1938 the Ninth All Latvian song Festival has been celebrated in Riga, the capital of Latvia. More ehan 400 ehoirs comprised of 18,000 singers have participated in the ninth Song Festival. All the singers and most of the audience were dressed in the national costumes of the various districts. Choirs from the nelghbouring countries, Lithuania, Estonia, have attended this festival.

In the soul of the Latvians we find vividly envisaged the idea of the universal power of song. Not only does song make life more tolerable, but the spirit of song dispels enmity while the power of song stays arrows and wards off wars. That is why the Latvians hope that the spirit and sound of their song will spread the boundaries of their own country. The song will be the bond uniting the spiritual culture of the nations, and will be the pror moter of brotherhood and peace,

8. KIRTAN AT ANANDA KUTIR

(Special Feature)

The Sankirtan conducted at Ananda Kutir at night has its own remarkable special features which will not be found anywhere in India. It is more a class of silent common meditation and Samadhi. It is a Santa type of Sankirtan. It is not of a violent type of Sankirtan which you will find in Punjab, Maharashtra, United Provinces, Bengal and other places.

Mridanga' Tabala, Dole, Cynbols, Kartals are not used at all. There is no clapping of hands. Aspirants sit in the meditative pose. One man sings sweetly and gently Namavalis or Dhwanis and the others follow. In other places only some select people lead but at Ananda Kutir the turn comes to

everyone. Even ladies, children and servants get their turn. Even big officers who feel shy in doing Kirtan are made to do Kitran.

The opening Kirtans, are Ganesh Kirtans, Saraswati Kirtan, Guru kirtan, Mahamantra Kirtan, Panchakshara Kirtan, Hanuman Kirtan, and Gouranga Kirtan. Om is chanted first loudly three times to begin with. As Lord Gouranga revived the Kirtan Movement and as his name is ever associated with Sankirtan, Kirtan of his name also is done. Kirtan is no Kirtan if Sri Hanuman is not invoked. Whenever Ramanam is sung, there dwells Ha-numan. Hence Hanuman Kirtan also is recited in the beginning. On Friday there is special Devi Kirtan. On Thursdays there is special Dattatreya Gurn Kirtan. On Saturdays there is special Hanuman Kirtan.

The Sankirtan of Ananda Kutir is more a Japa Kir-tan. Panchakshara, Ashtakshara, Dwadasakshara, Rama Taraka, Mahavakya, Gita Slokas, Upanishadic Mantras, Isavasya Upanishads and Kena Upanishads are sung, very beautifully. Mahamantra Kirtan is sung in a variety of ways. There is Sanskrit Kirtan. There is Nirguna Kirtan also.

Further the Sankirtan class is also a lecture class. Swamiji's English philosophical songs, Sanskrit songs and Vedantic songs are sung in the interval. This itself forms a lecture. The students give an introduction to the song first which itself is a beautiful lecture. The songs are full of practical spiritual in-truction. Sri Shiv Ram, Sri Sukhendu, Sri Jambunathan, Sri Parthasarathy, Sri Shiva Narayan are all experts in this direction.

Hindi Bhajans are sung in the interval, by Sri Mo-han, Ramesh, Satyanand and Ram Richpal. Occasionally Harmonium, Tabala are used on special functions. For Akhanda Kirtan cymbals are used at night to drive off sleepiness.

Sridhar Swami's lectures on practical Sadhana in the end are simply thrilling and wonderful. Other aspirants also deliver lectures. Guests and outside Sadhaks also deliver lectures in the end.

Sri Satyanandji's recitation of Srisukta, Lakshmi Ashtottara, Samagana, Vedic chanting is thrilling and touching.

Children are specialists in doing Kirtan and lectures.
S metimes Swami Pranavanandaji will come in his exalted state and sing the whole "wavelet of bliss" of Sri Swamiji in English and Tamil tunes. His Tamil songs will be highly touching.

Swamiji will sing "Philosophy and Yoga", wisdom sparks", Sangeeta Leela Yoga" and "Sangeeta Khaga wata". There will be no satiety even if you hear hundreds of time his "Maya" poem and "Divine Creeper.

Sri Shiva Narayan's Hindi lecture will be highly ele-vating. He is a master in giving homely analogies and stories. Young Satya's lecture in Hindi and Sanskrit and his Chopai and Doha will be a fine treat indeed.

Young Swami Krishnanda's fiery lecture on Vedantic philosophy and Vairagya will be soul-stirring and forcible. Sometimes two-party and three-party Kirtan are done.

This inspires and arouses many. Chanting Om and Ram is also done in two parties.

On Sundays Aditya Hridayam is recited. On Thursdays Dattatreya Stuti is chanted. On Mondays Sarva-lingastava is recited. On Saturdays Sangeeta Hanuman chaleesa (40 verses) in Hindi is recited. On Ekadasi days Vishnu Sahasranam is recited ; Sangeeta Ramayan in Hindi is sung.

Daily Mahabharata Santi Parva, Upanishads, one chapter of Gita, Mind, its mysteries and control, Aphorisms, Yoga Vasishta are recited. Sometimes Dramas "Radha's Prem", "Gita Drama" and "Brahmavidya Vilas" are enacted.

The function closes with common meditation, Aratai song "Jaya, Jaya Aratai Venugopala, ", Prayer for world peace, distribution of Bhasma, Kumkum of

Lord Viswanathan and Visalakshi and Prasad of Chun-dal, fruits and sweetmeats,

MAHARASHTRA KIRTAN DHWANIS

I

In Maharashtra the devotees start their Kirtan with singing : —"Jaya Jaya Ram Krishna Hari,"

Jaya Jaya Ram Krishna Hari.

Jaya Jaya Rama Krishna Hari' is the Mantra which Sri Tuka Ram received from Lord Krishna in his dream. Further this Mantra is an abbreviated form of the Maha Mantra :

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

II

In a landi near Poona where there is the Samadhi of the reputed Yogi, Sri Jnana Dev, people sing throughout twenty-four hours:- "Jnana Dev Tukka Ram."

III

Another favourite Kirtan of the Maharashtra devotees is : —

"Jaya Jaya Vittoba Rukmai
Jaya Jaya Vittoba Rukmai."

Vittoba or Vithala is another name for Lord Krishna.
Rukmini is mother of the universe. Rukmini is the consort of Lord Krishna.

IV

Another beautiful Kirtan is the combined names of the important Saints of Maharashtra: -

Thars : Sunaja

Nivritti nath, Jnana Dev, Sopan, Muktabai Ekanath, Nama Dev, Tukka Ram.

Nivritti Nath is the elder brother of Jnana Dev, the author of Jnaneshwari Gita. Sopan is another brother of Jnana Dev, whose Samadhi is in Sattara; Muktabai is the sister of Jnana Dev. The three brothers are regarded as the incarnations of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva and Muktabai as the incarnation of Maya. Mysterious is the birth of great souls. Mysterious is their end also.

10. SELECTED KIRTAN DHWANIS.

1. Jaya Ganesha, Jaya Ganesha, Jaya Ganesha Pahi mam Sri Ganesha, Sri Ganesha, Sri Ganesha Raksha mam.

2. Jaya Guru, Siva Guru, Hari Guru Ram Jagat Guru, Param Guru, Sad Guru Shyam Adi Guru, Adwaita Guru, Ananda Guru Om Chid Guru, Chidghana Guru, Chinmaya Guru Om.

3. Saravanabhava, Saravanabhava, Saravanabhava
Pahi mam
Subramauya, Subramanya, Subramanya Raksha mam.

4. Goura Hari, Goura Hari, Goura Hari Pahi mạm Gouranga Hari, Gouranga Hari, Gouranga Hari Raksha mani.

5. Jaya Saraswati, Jaya Saraswati, Jaya Saraswati
Pahi mam
Sri Saraswati, Sri Saraswati, Sri Saraswati
Kaksha mam,

6. Sivaya Namah Om, Sivaya Namah
Slvaya Namah Om, Namah Sivaya,

Siva Siva Siva Siva, Sivaya Nama Om
Bam Bam Bam Bam, Namah Sivaya,
Siva Siva Sankara, Hara Hara Sankara,
Jaya Jaya Sankara, Namami Sankara,
Samba Sada Siva, Samba Sada Siva,
Samba Sada Siva, Samba Sivom Hara.
Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namah Sivaya,
Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namah Sivaya.

7. Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram
Patita Pavana Sita Ram
Jaya Raghu Nandana Jaya Siya Ram
Janaki Vallabha Raja Ram.

8. Achyutam Keshavam Rama Narayanam
Krishna Damodaram Vasudevam Harim,
Sridharam Madhavam, Gopika Vallabham
Janakee Nayakam Ramachandram Bhaje.

9. Jaya Jaga Janani Sankata Harini
Tribhuvana Tarini Maheshwari.

10. Dattatreya Favasharanam
Dattam Natha Bhava Haranam
Datta Guru Jaya Datta Guru,
Poorna Guru Avadhuta Guru.

11. Ishwari, Maheshwari, Parameshwari Pahi mam Kameshwari,Mateshwari,Sarveshwari Raksha mam.

12. Dhana Lakshmi, Dhanya Lakshmi, Dhairya Lakshmi Pahi mam
Vara Lakshmi, Vijaya Lakshmi, Vidya Lakshmi
Raksha mam
Jaya Lakshmi, Gaja Lakshmi, Pankaja Lakshmi
Nama Om,

Ashta Lakshmi, Maya Lakshmi Padma Lakshmi
Saranam Om.

13. Jaya Gange, Jaya Gange Rani,
Sri Gange Jaya Hara Gange.

14. Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya
Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

15. Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.

EKA SLOKI RAMAYNA

1. Bala Kanda

Rama Rama Jaya Raja Ram Rama Rama Jaya Sita Ram
Sri Rama was born Jaya Jaya Ram
To destroy Ravana Sita Ram
Rama killed Jaya Jaya Ram
Tataka Subahu Sita Ram
He delivered Ahalya Jaya Jaya Ram
And married Sita Sita Ram

2. Ayodhya Kanda

Kaikeyi Devi Jaya Jaya Ram
Got boons from Dasaratha Sita Ram

3. Arayna Kanda

Rama went Jaya Jaya Ram
To Dandaka forest Sita Ram
Ravana came now Jaya Jaya Ram
And took away Sita Sita Ram

4. Kishkindha Kanda

Rama killed Vali — Jaya Jaya Ram
And enthroned Sugriva — Sita Ram

5. Sundara Kanda

Hanuman crossed the sea — Jaya Jaya Ram
And gave the ring to Sita — Sita Ram
He burnt Lanka — Jaya Jaya Ram
And gave Rama Chudamani — Sita Ram

6. Yuddha Kanda

Rama Killed — Jaya Jaya Ram
Kumbhakarna, Ravana — Sita Ram
Lakshmana killed — Jaya Jaya Ram
The mighty Meghanada — Sita Ram
Rama installed — Jaya Jaya Ram
Vibhishana on the throne — Sita Ram
Then all came back — Jaya Jaya Ram
To Ayodhya City — Sita Ram
Vasishtha installed — Jaya Jaya Ram
Rama on the throne — Sita Ram
He who reads — Jaya Jaya Ram
Eka Sloki Ramayana — Sita Ram
Will attain son, wealth — Jaya Jaya Ram
Bhakti, Mukti — Sita Ram
Rama Rama Jaya Raja Ram — Rama Rama Jaya Sita Raja

EKA SLOKI BHAGAVATA

Shyam Shyam Jaya — Jaya Jaya Shyam
Shyam Shyam Jaya — Radheshyam
Krishna Krishna Jaya — Jaya Jaya Shyam
Krishna Krishna Jaya — Radheshyam
Om Namo Bhagavate — Jaya Jaya Shyam

Vasudevaya Radheshyam
Lord Krishna was born Jaya Jaya Shyam
To destroy Kamsa Radheshyam
And all other Asuras Jaya Jaya Shyam
And to establish Dhar Radheshyam
He killed Pootana Jaya Jaya Shyam
And Trinavarta, Vatsasura Radheshyam
He Killed also Jaya Jaya Shyam
Bakasura, Aghasura Radheshyam
He lifted Govardhan Jaya Jaya Shyam
And did Rasa Lila Radheshyam
He killed Sankhachuda Jaya Jaya Shyam
And Kesi and Vyoma Radheshyam
He made Kubja straight Jaya Jaya Shyam
And killed Radheshyam
Kuvalayapeeda
He wrestled with Chanura Jaya Jaya Shyam
And killed him too Radheshyam
He killed Panchajana Jaya Jaya Shyam
And blessed Muchukunda Radheshyam
He married Rukmini Jaya Jaya Shyam
And Satyabhama too Radheshyam
He married also Jaya Jaya Shyam
Kalindi, Mitravinda Radheshyam
He killed Narakasura Jaya Jaya Shyam
And cut Bana's arms Radheshyam
He killed Sisupala Jaya Jaya Shyam
Salva and Dantavakra Radheshyam
He blessed Kuchela Jaya Jaya Shyam
His old friend Radheshyam
He instructed Uddhava Jaya Jaya Shyam
In Bhakti and Jnana Radheshyam
He said to Uddhava Jaya Jaya Shyam
This world is unreal Radheshyam
Look on all beings Jaya Jaya Shyam

With equal eyes Radheshyam
Abandon egoism Jaya Jaya Shyam
Control mind and senses Radheshyam
Discharge your duties Jaya Jaya Shyam
Meditate on the truth Radheshyam
Fix your mind on me Jaya Jaya Shyam
Practise Yama Niyama Radheshyam
Serve the Preceptor Jaya Jaya Shyam
Free yourself from pride Radheshyam
Don't find fault with any Jaya Jaya Shyam
Be indifferent to wealth Radheshyam
Feel that Atma Jaya Jaya Shyam
Is separate from the body Radheshyam
See Brahman everywhere Jaya Jaya Shyam
Remove Dehadhyasa Radheshyam
Do good to all Jaya Jaya Shyam
Take refuge in Me Radheshyam
Do Japa, Kirtan Jaya Jaya Shyam
Meditate on Me Radheshyam
He who studies Jaya Jaya Shyam
Eka-sloki Bhagvata Radheshyam
Will attain peace, wealth Jaya Jaya Shyam
Bhakti, Mukti Radheshyam
Om Namo Bhagavate Jaya Jaya Shyam
Vasudevaya Radheshyam
Shyam Shyam Jaya Jaya Jaya Shyam
Shyam Shyam Jaya Radheshyam
Krishna Krishna Jaya Jaya Jaya Shyam
Krishna Krishna Jaya Radheshyam

PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE

1. What is Love

Love is a mysterious divine glue that unites the hearts of all. It is divine magical healing balm of a very high potency. A life without faith, love and devotion is a dreary waste. It is real death. Love is Divine. Love is the greatest force on earth. It is irresistible. It is love alone that can really conquer the heart of a man. Love subdues an enemy. Love can tame wild animals. Its power is infinite. Its depth is unfathomable. Its nature is ineffable. Its glory is indescribable.

We have to develop gradually universal love through selfless service, Satsang with Mahatmas, prayer, recitation of Gurumantra, etc. When the heart is contracted through selfishness in the begin-ning, man loves only his wife, children, a few friends and relatives. As he evolves, he loves the people of his own district, then the people of his own province.
Later on he develops love for men of his own country. Eventually, he begins to love other people of different countries. In the long run he begins to love all. He develops universal love. All the barriers are broken asunder; heart has expanded to infinitum.

It is easy to talk of universal love; when you want to put it into actual practice, it becomes extremely difficult. Petty-mindedness of all sorts stands in the way. Old, wrong Samskaras which you have created by your wrong thinking in the past act as stumbling blocks. Through iron determina-tion, strong will, patience, perseverance, and Vichar (right enquiry), you can conquer all obstacles quite easily. The grace of the Lord will descend upon you if you are sincere, my dear friends.

Universal love terminates in Adwaitic unity of oneness or Upanishadic consciousness of seers and sages. Pure love is a great leveller. It brings equality and cosmic vision. Mira, Gouranga, Tukaram, Ramdas, Hafiz, Kabir have all tasted this universal love. In the one embrace of universal love all differences and petty, illusory distinctions melt away.
Love alone reigns supreme.

There is no virtue higher than love, there is no treasure higher than love, there is no knowledge higher than love, there is no Dharma higher than love, there is no religion higher than love because Love is Truth. Love is God. This world has come out of Love, this world exists in Love and this world ultimately dissolves in Love. God is an embodiment of love. In every inch of His creation you can verily understand His love.

Live in love. Breathe in love. Sing in love. Eat in love. Drink in love. Talk in love. Pray in love. Meditate in love. Think in love. Move in love. Die in love. Purify your thoughts, speech and action in the fire of love. Bathe and plunge in the sacred ocean of love. Imbibe the honey of love and become an embodiment of love.

In the beginning stage a Bhakta worships God.
He dislikes other kinds of Bhaktas who worship other Devatas. Sakamya Bhakti is one where the Bhakta worships God for getting riches or son or for the removal of suffering from diseases. Sakamya Bhakti will eventually terminate in Nishkamya Bhakti.
Even Dhruva had only Sakamya Bhakti in the beginning. When he had Darshan of Lord Hari, all his desires vanished. He developed Para Bhakti.
Para Bhakti is a fire that burns all mundane desires.
It was only Prahlada who had pure Nishkamya Bhakti from his very boyhood.
Vyabhicharini Bhakti is one in which the devotee worships or loves God for sometime and then his wife, children and property for sometime. To love God and God alone for ever and ever is Avyabhicharini Bhakti. Prahlada in the advanced stage of devotion meditated on his own Self as Lord Hari. This is Abheda Bhakti.

Satsang or association with Sadhus and Bhaktas helps a long way in developing universal love. In the company of saints conversations on God take place. These are very pleasing to the heart and ears. The deliverance of Jagai and Madhai and dacoit Ratnakar from a most sinful life they were leading, affords striking examples of what the company of Sadhus can do.

Stand up dear friends. Struggle hard. Piod on.

Annihilate egoism, selfishness, pride and hatred.
Serve. Love. Give. Remember the triplet "Datta-Daya-Dama" -"Give have mercy-control the Indriyas." Practise this also. Do not expect even gratitude, approbation, admiration for the services that you render. Consecrate everything at the lotus feet of the Lord. Have the motto: "Love for love's sake. Work for work's sake."

Become a true Vaishnavite, humbler than the blade of grass that is trodden under your feet, more patient than the tree, not caring for honour from others, yet honouring all, singing always the name of Hari and serving humanity-Lord in manifestation.
You will soon develop universal love or Prem. You will have Darshan of Hari. I assure you. This alone will give you immortality and eternal peace.

2. Gospel of Love

The path of love is the right royal road that leads to the abode of immortality and eternal bliss-Param Dhama, where time cannot exercise its des. tructive power, where Maya cannot show her face.
It is the clear and open way to God. Prem frees the devotee from the round of births and deaths. Beatitude is love's handmaid. Love is the highest attachment.

The devotee has no desire whatsoever for self-enjoyment. His one keen longing is to love the Lord for the sake of love and serve Him for His Pleasure's sake. When a devotee develops such a love, the Lord becomes his slave.

Pure, unselfish love is Prem or devotion to the Lord. Pure love is a rare commodity. It has to be gradually cultivated. It endures or lasts for ever. There cannot be any rupture or friction or weary face or frowning here. There is no decline or waning. It always increases like the waxing moon or the Ganges in the rainy season.

Pure love alone can remove all barriers that separate man from man. Pure love alone can eradicate all sorts of unreasonable dislikes and prejudices, intolerance and hatred. Fure love alone can unite a Jew and a Christian, a Hindu and a Muslim, a Catholic and a Protestant, a Brahmin and a non-Brahmin, a Vaishnavite and a Saivite, a Sanatanist and a Samajist, a Shakta and a Ramanandi, an Englishman and an Italian, a Chinese and a Japanese, a Sannyasi and a Vairagi, on a common platform and the core of their hearts also.

Even best friends in the world fight amongst themselves. Even husbands and wives who are united for a long time quarrel among themselves.
Even fathers and sons are at loggerheads. But there can never be any break of continuity in pure love.
Pure love is Divine. Pure love is God. God is pure love. In pure love there can never be any tinge or microscopical trace of selfishness. That is the reason why it endures for ever. Love is a great purifier of mind.

Love or Prem is a mighty power. It indeed exercises a wonderful power over the beings that come under its masterful influence. Love is a great leveller. All differences between the two vanish.

The lover and the beloved are placed in the same level. Pure, unselfish love can turn God into human and human into God. There is no power on earth greater than love. Niyamas or rules are broken by the power of love.

Love is the immediate way to Truth or the kingdom of God or the vast domain of perennial peace and joy. It is the life-principle of creation. It is the highest expression of soul-force. It is the sum-total of all the duties of religion. It is the magic wand in the hand of a devotee with which he conquers the whole world. It has been the driving force behind Mira, Radha, Tukaram, Tulsidas, Gouranga, Jesus and God-intoxicated Sufis-Mansoor and Shams Tabriez.

St. John says: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the Light. Let us not move in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and Truth. If we love one another, God abideth in us and His love is perfected in us. He that abideth

in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Love is thus the clear and open way to God, so simple and so perfect that many fail to find it, seeking instead some more elaborate road."

Love brings extreme satisfaction. When the devotee comes face to face with the Lord, his heart is filled with supreme bliss and joy. All his desires are gratified. Hear the words of Dhruva. He says:
"Just as a man looking for a piece of glass, hits upon a sparkling gem, so also, O Lord have I by practising Tapas in quest of a royal throne, attained Thee. I am perfectly satisfied. I do not want any boon."

When your life's journey is about to come to an end you will get the company of a Sadhu or a Mahatma. In his company you will gradually develop devotion to the Lord, abandon attachment to worldly objects, draw inspiration, and get elevation of mind. You will gei attached to the lotus-feet of the Lord. It is through contact with a saint and through his blessings you will get firm conviction in the existence of God and firm faith in devotion to the Lord. You can have no Bhakti without direct contact with Mahatmas. You cannot free yourself from the fetters and ties of the world without the grace of saints. Even if you perform Tapasya, Vedic sacrifice, charitable deeds, study of scriptures, worship of Sun, Indra and Agni, you cannot attain Bhagavan. It is only through the Satsang of Mahatmas, you will get the passport to enter directly the kingdom of God.

There is no true happiness for him here or hereafter who has forgotten the Lord. There is no real peace for him who leads a selfish life and who separates himself from others on account of pride and egoism. Constant remembrance of the Lord will eradicate all miseries and sorrows and will confer immor-tality, bliss and peace on the devotee. Self-sacrifice will destroy selfishness and egoism. Self-sacrifice is the shortest route to Divine Union.

"Ahara" means food. This is the literal meaning.

In a broad sense it means "That which is grasped by the respective Indriya.". You should give spiritual food to the mind. Then only the mind will attain one-pointedness. Then only it will become pure.
Then only you can attain Self-realisation. The eyes should see the picture of your Ishtam or any other holy object. The ears should hear the Upanishads, Ramayana or Bhagavata. The tongue should speak of matter that concerns God. These are pure spiritual food for the Indriyas and the mind.

If you are a true seeker of God you will meet Him within a moment. Remember Him always. Live by His name. Sing His praises. Search Him in your heart of hearts. Learn the way from the devotees to love and serve God-the support of your soul, the only sovereign of the whole world, the Indweller of your heart and the Inner Ruler.

Combine adoration with love. Then you will develop true Bhakti. Adoration preserves, augments, dignifies and broadens love. Endeavour, in making your faith a matter of adoration and love. Practise this religion of loving adoration' in your daily life.

Utter in every breath the name of the Lord. Centre your thoughts upon His lotus-feet. Pray like Goswami Tulsidas for purity of mind. Sing like Mira the songs of surrender. Have pure, unselfish love for the Lord. Let it grow more and more every day. Do not ask God for Siddhis and worldly possessions-not even for salvation.

If you are not able to form the image of your Ishta Devata, you may try to hear either the sound of the Mantra repeated by you or to think on the letters of the Mantra in order. This will stop your mind-wandering.

Try to feel that the Lord is seated in the chambers of your heart. If the form of the Lord produced by your own imagination suits you best in your meditation, you can meditate on that form. Though you can only have a hotch-potch glimpse of the form, it will assume gradually a clear-cut and well-defined shape on account of constant practice. Be regular in your meditation. Think

and feel that the form is surrounded by a halo of light and the darkness in your mind is dispelled by this divine splendour.

Cling like a bee to the lotus-feet of the Lord. Find out the path that leads to love. Taste the honey of Divine Prem. Become Premamaya. Become an embodiment of love. Live in love. Move in love.
Have your very being in love.

3. Faith

Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "Threefold is by nature the inbern faith of the embodied-pure, passionate and dark (Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic).
The faith of each is shaped according to his own nature, O Bharata. The man consists of his faith; that which his faith is, he is even that."

Faith indicates what man's character is. Have true, perfect, living, unswerving faith in God, in His grace, in the power of His name. Meditate and open yourself to the Divine Light. You will be transmuted into Divinity.

Faith can move mountains. Faith can work wonders. Faith can take you to the inner chambers of the Lord. Faith can make you Divine. Faith can give you peace, inner spiritual strength, joy, freedom, immortality and bliss. Therefore have genuine and living faith in the existence of God, in the scriptures, in the words of your Guru and in your own Self.

Faith is a rare flower of inestimable value. It must be cultivated in the garden of your heart. It must be nourished daily with the water of sincerity. The weeds of doubt and misgivings should be totally eradicated. Then it will strike deep root, blossom and bear the fruit of devotion quickly.

Faith can be strengthened by Satsang (contact with sages and devotees), prayer, self-purification, meditation and study of scriptures. You can ascend the rungs of the spiritual ladder with the help of intense unflinching faith alone. Whenever doubts assail you, reject them ruthlessly. Open your heart to the Divine Light, the source for all knowledge, all light. Become as simple

as a child. Pray from the bottom of your heart. The flame will again become brighter and brighter.

Self-realisation is a transcendental experience.
You can march in the spiritual path only by placing implicit faith in the words of sages who have realised the Truth (Apta Vakya) and have attained knowledge of the Self.

Srutis emphatically declare, *"Sraddha Bhakti Dhyana yogadvai hi* -know Him by faith, devotion and meditation." Faith comes first. Without faith you cannot practise either concentration or meditation.

Kannappa, the hunter of Kalahasthi, had true living faith in Lord Siva. He gave as an offering daily flesh of the wild beasts to the Lord. Siva tested the sincerity of Kannappa one day. Tears fell from His right eye (in the Siva Linga). Kannappa was sorely moved. He plucked his right eye and fixed it in the Siva-linga. The next day there were tears in the Linga's left eye. Kannappa plucked his left eye and fixed it in the Linga. At once Lord Siva appeared before Kannappa and blessed him. He had new eyes immediately and attained the Kingdom of Lord Siva-Kailasa, the abode of immortality and eternal bliss. You should possess the same unshakable living faith which Kannappa had. Then only you can enjoy the everlasting peace of the eternal.

Prahlada was persecuted by his father in a variety of ways. He was rolled down from the summit of a mountain. He was trampled under the feet of an elephant. He was thrown into the sea. He was put in a big vessel containing boiling oil. Cobras were thrown at him. Poison was administered to him by his own mother. And yet he did not lose his faith in Lord Narayana. He was clinging to Hari tenaciously like a leech. His faith was unflinching and unshakable. Such must be the faith of aspirants of the Lord. You will be tested by the Lord in various ways. Even under extreme trials and difficulties, you should not lose your faith. Faith is your sheet-anchor. It was the unswerving faith that has made the two boy-devo-tees, Prahlada and Dhruva immortal. Their achievement was the work of that simple secret called "faith." All

obstacles and difficulties, however great and powerful they may be, will vanish entirely before sincere and living faith.

Hear not the voice of the mind. This voice will delude you. Follow the voice of your soul. This voice will lift you up and take you to the goal.

When you hear lectures or discourses that disturb your faith, that make your faith flicker, leave the place at once. Do not keep company with such people till you grow, till you get established in the rock of Divine Prem. Never budge an inch from your present position. Stand adamant in the bedrock of faith. May you have the intense living faith of Prahlada!

You cannot achieve anything grand, sublime and meritorious with a weak and wavering faith. You cannot reach the goal of life with a faith that flickers at every step. You cannot ascend the summit of Nirvikalpa Samadhi or Maha-Bhav Samadhi with an impotent and passive faith. Your faith must be as firm as the Himalayas or the Sumeru mountains.
It must be as steady as the lamp that burns steadily in a windless place.

Abandon all sorts of wrong beliefs, weaknesses, superstitions, wrong notions. and ideas of impossibilities, Cling fast to the faith in divine possibilities. Have faith in divine life. Aspire fervently and constantly to live in the Divine.

To the faithless the express significance of the Vedas and the Maha Vakyas is like a thing sunk in mire. It is like the howling of a dog with its eyes cast upon the heavens.

Maya havocs through doubt. Doubt seriously torments and disturbs the peace of mind. The doubt regarding the Pramana (Pramana Gata Samsaya) can be removed by Sravana or hearing of the Srutis from the teacher. The doubt regarding the Prameya (Prameya gata Samsaya) can be removed by Manana or reflection on what you have heard. Vipareeta Bhavana can be removed by constant Nididhyasan or meditation on the immortal Atman.

Have faith in God and proper understanding of the scriptures. If ignorant people with impure hearts and perverted intellects read Gita, Ramayana, or Bhaga-vata, they will only try to find out mistakes through Dosha Drishti. They begin to discuss useless points, viz,, "Why Rama killed a Sudra who was practising Tapas in a forest? Is this justifiable? Why Krishna did this and that? Why did the Avatara commit such mistakes?" Such people will not be benefited by the study of sacred scriptures. Their minds are like the sieve. They will leave out the essence that has to be grasped and misconstrue things in a wrong light. Only those who have purified their minds will be able to understand the real significance of the teachings of scriptures.

Lord Rama killed the Sudra. The Sudra deserved such a capital punishment, because he murdered the son of a Brahmin. Rama did this act to maintain law, order and Dharma. Can you find any fault with the Ruler of this universe, who is Omniscient, who is the Dispenser of fruits of actions, according to the nature of Karmas of Jivas? Some orthodox and narrow-minded persons twist the truth and play mischief. It is priestcraft and religious cheating.

Lord Rama is the Supreme Soul, the Antaryamin, the Protector of all beings. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. He is Lord Hari. He was never born. He never died. Lord Hari simply manifested in the form of Rama to do Loka-Sangraha and then vanished. He had Chaitanya body, though to all appearances, it appeared like flesh. Remember this, understand this point clearly.

It is simply foolishness to bring Lord Rama or Lord Krishna to the level of an ordinary human being and to speak of His acts whether justified or not.
There are some idle people who for the sake of curiosity indulge in such talks just to while away the time in unnecessary discussions and debates and to show themselves that they are also learned and religious-minded.

These sorts of people do not do any kind of Sadhana. They have no Vairagya and waste their time in idle gossiping. They lack proper understanding of the scriptures and faith in God and His Lilas. There is no practical Vedanta these days. There is only

Vedantic gossiping. It is blasphemy to say that Lord Rama did a wrong act. A real aspirant will never indulge in such frivolous talks. Time is fleeting. Every moment must be well utilised in His worship and service. There is no use of arguing. You must do something practical and cross this ocean of Moha in this very birth. Religion is realisation. We must live an ideal spiritual life every second. Whenever friends indulge in such topics turn a deaf ear, keep silence or leave the place immediately. You will enjoy peace. You will save much time for your spiritual Sadhana.

Religion is not for discussion around the club table. Religion is faith for knowing and worshipping God. Religion is practical life in the Eternal Atma through earnest, protracted Sadhana for years, after withdrawing the turbulent Indriyas and controlling the mind.

Just as coloured water penetrates freely and nicely a piece of pure white cloth so also the instructions of a sage can penetrate and settle down in the hearts of aspirants only when their minds are calm, when there are no desires for enjoyments and when the impurities of their minds are destroyed. That is the reason why an aspirant is expected to possess the qualifications of Viveka, Vairagya, Sama, Dama, Sraddha and Upa-rati before he practises hearing of Srutis, reflection and meditation. Discipline and purification of the mind and the Indriyas are the prerequisites of an aspirant in the path of Truth and God-realisation,

Even when God is explained those who have not been purged of their faults and impurities, either disbelieve or misbelieve it, as was the case with Indra, Virochana, etc. Therefore knowledge as incul. cated arises in him who has by Tapas,.etc., performed either in this birth or in many previous births, purified himself. The Sruti says: "To that high-souled man whose devotion to the Lord is great, and whose devotion to his preceptor is as great as that to the Lord, these secrets explained become illumined."

The Lord Hari manifested in the form of Lord Krishna and Rama for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly

establishing righteousness. Lord Krishna says: "The foolish disregard me when clad in human semblance, ignorant of My supreme nature, the Great Lord of all beings." Study Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavata and other scriptures and have proper understanding. Do not be carried away by the turbulent senses, the influences of your useless friends and idle discussions. By devotion and faith know Him in essence and through His grace attain Supreme Bliss, Supreme Peace and Supreme Knowledge! May God bless you !!

4. The Lovers' Path

The lover's path is as much difficult as that of a Vedantin or Raja Yogin. No path is very easy. There is no royal road in spirituality. It is only to encourage the aspirant that seers say that the path of devotion or love is the easiest. Every path or every Yoga demands the entire annihilation of egoism. The Karma Yogi kills his egoism through selfless service.
The Bhakta kills his egoism through self-surrender or Atma Samarpana (Saranagati). The Vedantin destroys his egoism through self-denial or self-abnegation.

How difficult it is in this world to please another man and obtain his love and affection! The husband gives the best of things to his wife, purchases for her valuable clothes and ornaments, serves her in a variety of ways days and nights, and yet he is not able to satisfy her completely. The clerk in the office works from morning till sunset and yet he is not able to please his boss and obtain his love. He is served with 24 hours' notice of dismissal for a slight mistake. The Dewan (prime minister) tries his level best to please the Maharaja and get his love and yet he fails to please him perfectly. If such is the case in worldly love, what fiery ordeal must not the devotee pass through in obtaining the love of God; what sort of pains must he not patiently bear before he can enter the domain of supreme love?

If you want to have an interview with the Viceroy or the King how difficult it is to get an appointment? The private secretary writes: "His Excellency or His Majesty is very busy these days. Wait for a fortnight." If you want to see the

Deputy Commissioner, the orderly says, "Sahib is very busy, come day after to-morrow." If such is the case in worldly matters, how difficult will it not be to have interview with Lord Krishna, the Lord of the three worlds?

The path of love is rugged, thorny and precipitous.
It is the razor path. It is exceedingly narrow also. It can admit only one. When there is Lord there is no 'I.' When there is 'I' there is no Lord. Just as the acrobat walks on the thin wire so also the aspirant walks on a thin wire. If he is careless he may trip at any moment in the deep abyss below. Further, Maya's sword is hanging above his neck. There are crocodiles in the deep abyss below. In the front is a big fire. There are scorpions and cobras behind. How courageous then the aspirant must be! He is always supported by the invisible hands of the Unseen.

The nectar is ever oozing from the fountain of love within the chambers of the heart. The devotee drinks it and feels the warm embrace of the Lord at every step. That is the reason why he marches in the path with undaunted spirit. Without the Divine Grace the battle cannot be won by him. Without His help and mercy, he cannot move an inch in the hazardous path.

The path of love demands endless patience and endurance. Eventually the devotee or lover comes out victorious in his battle through the grace of the Lord, just as the first prize winner comes out triumphant in the obstacle race after passing through the drum, ring, slippery plank, etc. Even so the devotee has to pass through dry wilderness and cyclonic storms. He has to cross many fierce foaming streams. He has to ascend many precipitous peaks. He has to steer many whirlpols in the stormy sea of this life. He has to bear patiently severe persecutions. There is no room for lamentation or despair even if there are thousand and one difficulties. All will melt away like rent clouds or mist before the Sun if the aspirant is sincere and persistent, if he has iron determination and fiery resolve, if he is regular in his prayers and worship.

How courageously the man who knows fencing acts when he is pelted by stones by several people on all sides! He wards off each stone very

dexterously and protects himselfin a marvellous manner. Even so the devotee must be bold when he treads on the path of love. The Lord will appear only when the devotee has abandoned the least tinge or trace of egoism, when he has made complete self-surrender. He will be tested in a variety of ways. When Draupadi fully relied on the help of the Lord only, and when she totally placed herself at the feet of Sri Krishna, the Lord of Dwarka came to her rescue immediately and multiplied her clothes.

Mira had to undergo fiery ordeals before she entered the portals of the region of supreme love where her beloved Krishna reigned in supreme splendour and glory. She underwent persecutions of all sorts. She walked bare-footed in the burning sands of Rajputana. She lived on alms. She slept on the ground. She starved continuously. In spite of these ordeals she was always in rapturous delight through the grace of the Lord,

Through the grace of the Lord the fire was converted into ice for Prahlada. Burning oil was like cool oil of sandal for him. Through the grace of Giridhari Gopal, the cobra was converted into an idol of Krishna (Saligram, garland of flowers) for Mira, poison was changed into nectar and a bed of sharp nails into a bed of roses. Madhava's Grace makes a dumb man eloquent and a lame man ascend the highest peaks of the Himalayas.

The devotee must crush the bones of his right leg into a fine powder and extract oil out of it and then burn a wick with this oil for six months continuously (Akhanda-Deepa). Then only he can obtain the Love of the Lord. Then only he can freely enter the kingdom of God. Then only he can dwell always in his Lord. Then only the Lord takes care of the rudder and row the boat of His devotee safely to the other shore.

What is this divine love? It is not the selfish love of worldly minded persons to get something from another. It is not thelove to see a handsome face of a maiden or her piercing glances or her beautiful dress. It is not a temporary outburst of some vague emotion. **The language of love is the language of tears.** It can hardly be described in adequate terms. The fortunate devotee only experiences within himself this sweet love. The flame of divine love

burns in the heart of the thirsting devotee day and night. He never cares for his food and drink. He is emaciated. He pines away for the separation of the Lord. He does not sleep at night. He does not know when his Beloved will give Darshan. So he keeps vigil whole night. When the devotee has completely killed his egoism, when he has made perfect self-surrender without any reservation or secret desire for his gratification, when he thirsts like the fish out of water for meeting his Beloved, when he feels the separation from the Lord intensely, when the Viraha-Agni scorches him to the extreme degree, the Lord appears before the devotee. Then only the Lord wipes his tears, feeds him with his own hands and carries him on His shoulders.

There is no loss in total unreserved self-surrender.
It is not at all a bad bargain. It is a mighty gain indeed. You will have to give your body, mind, soul and possessions unto Him. The Lord gives Himself unto you. The whole wealth of the Lord belongs to you. The Lord, Himself becomes your own. You have purchased Him by showing your love unto Him. He is your slave now. You will become. one with the Lord, just as the sugar when dissolved in water becomes one with water. What He wants is your whole heart fully charged with pure love. The devotee says, "I am Thine and Thou art mine also." Even if there is slightest tinge of selfishness you cannot attain Him.

The lover who has developed supreme love is not a slave of forms, formalities and dogmas. He is not bound by the rules of society. There is no outward show. There is no ringing of bells. He does not care for the sarcastic remarks of the world. His state is indescribable. He pours forth his love on his Beloved. The love is spontaneous. The flow of love is gushing in a continuous stream. There is no break. Sometimes when he feels the acute pang of separation from his Beloved, he feels as if he is roasted in a hot pan over the furnace. Immediately the divine nectar dribbles. Then he feels as if he has taken a plunge in the cool waters of the Ganges.

The lover cannot bear the separation of his Beloved even for a second. Even a moment of separation is a pang of death for him. A second appears to him

as one year. When there is separation he thirsts and pants for His presence. His eyes become vacant and face becomes blank when there is burning in his heart. He gives up his food, drink and sleep. He is restless. He sheds profuse tears of love. He finds solace in the tears. His thirst is quenched a bit. He nourishes the delicate and exquisite creeper of love through his tears. He has no thought save of his Beloved. The fountain of love within his heart is ever full. It never dries up. Love gushes out from the fountain within in a continuous stream. It is a perennial current of supreme love. Nothing can obstruct its flow.

The path of love is doubtless beset with difficulties.
But the devotee who is adamant in his resolve and fiery in his Sadhana and Vairagya, who has dedicated himself and his all to the Lord, who remembers Him always, crosses over all difficulties quite easily. He gets the Divine Grace at every step, at every stage. He always lives in God.

The Bhakta says "I am Thine" the Vedantin says "I am He." The devotee who utters "I am Thine" eventually realises the significance of the formula 'I am He.' "Dasoham" culminates in "Sivoham" or "Soham" or "Gopaloham" when he develops Para Bhakti or Supreme Love. The fruit of love is Jnana. Love begins with two and ends in one.

O Beloved Ram! Will you not develop a heart that bursts forth into tears of joy at the name of the Lord. Allow the waves oflove to arise constantly in your heart. Feel the warmth of the Divine em-brace. Bask in the deep sunshine of Divine Love. Taste the Bliss of the Eternal Love. Drink deep the nectar of divine love and be ever happy.

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